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THE PERMANENCE OF ART.

In the pages of *The Dial* last fall there appeared certain communications on the well-worn theme "Art for Art's Sake," from the pen of Mr. John Burroughs, as well as partial answers to them. It was easy to see that he was not so anxious to "make our poets in love" with "things" more than with "poetry," as he was to recommend, by delicate insinuation, the "style" of Walt Whitman as worthy of enthusiastic study and imitation. Now, though we are strongly disposed to admire Whitman as a *man* for many a noble thought and brave expression, we are not quite prepared to usher him as *poet* into the upper chamber of the world's literary parliament, where Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Shelley, and Tennyson, with so many other splendid peers, hold honorable seats. But of Walt Whitman we may speak at some other time. Let it be frankly admitted that this mention of Mr. John Burrough's articles is really quite irrelevant to the subject of the present paper, save for the fact that one of his sentences set us to thinking.

"In love with things"—that is what our poets are not enough, for they are, Mr. Burroughs thinks, too entirely "in love with poetry." We applaud the dictum of our quoted critic, if he means that a poet should have in the first place something to say, and make his *verse-form* his second concern only. But that a true poet must—speaking with a strict attention to the meaning of words—be more in love with things than with *poetry* we refuse to believe. Would he ever go to the trouble of writing, were he primarily concerned with things? As artisan, perhaps, but surely not as artist. For he would, were he consistent, spend his allotted life in ogling, caressing, arranging, and rearranging *things*; he would labor early and late to acquire and control them. For he would be, in plain terms, "a lover of things," and

never a "poet" except in the sense that Gray supposes to be a possible one, when he whispers pathetically of "mute inglorious Miltons," in our opinion quite impossible freaks of nature.

For why, we ask ourselves bluntly, should this fortunate youth, endowed with a supreme passion for things, busy himself with what he loves so much less, with poetry that most wily and exacting siren of all the arts? The only explanation of such a man's deliberate turning into a book-maker of the conscientious sort—i. e. not for lucre—would be the appearance all of a sudden of an unreasonable missionary zeal. Unreasonable, we repeat, because no one, surely, will claim that "things" being unconscious, and manifesting no courteous delight in human flattery, will be benefited by the preaching of such an ardent zealot? Missionary zeal of this quality, or brand, is admirable, but it argues fatally against the whole-hearted fondness for *things* which we assumed to exist in our gifted youth. Only because he loved men as much as his well-beloved "things", would he feel compelled to make them aware of the entire loveliness of "things." Nothing but a hunger and thirst for human sympathy and appreciation superior to his appetite for things, could, we believe, move such a man to write a line of true poetry. But this is against our hypothesis, invalidates totally our assumption, and obliges us to save the position of Walt Whitman's gallant champion by interpreting his words afresh, by putting a loose construction upon them, strict constructionists though we are inclined to be. In entire accord with another writer in *The Dial*, we will assert that a true poet loves what he has to say, and loves also to be heard, and therefore weds the thought or sentiment to the most insinuating and permanently effective form he can construct. We might further say that at bottom this is just what Mr. John Burroughs meant. Weary of volumes produced by idle tinkers of rhyme, who count feet on their literary fingers, when they would do better to cobble at literal shoes, he gave impatiently an over-emphatic expression

to his idea. Like Macaulay, he succumbed to an innate love of rhetoric — and did not of course expect to be understood to mean exactly what he said. Alas, who does?

But grant for a moment that a poet ought to be in love with things, — and this we gladly do — a question suggests itself, an exegetic question of very great importance. In love with things as they are, or rather, as they are presented to our daily observation? Or, shall it be, in love with things as we believe they have it in them to become, with things according to their apparent possibilities rather than their often damaged actuality, or arrested development? The first answer is the source of realism, the second that of idealism in art.

It is quite impossible for any one who considers with some seriousness the matter of the permanency, by perpetuation from age to age, of the noble arts, who desires to make a sober inquiry into it, permanently to postpone a settlement in his mind of this vital issue:—realism or idealism? Absolute realism is an absurd theory which no great artist has ever carried into his work-shop. The theory is compelled to make concession after concession to its vigorous, indefatigable opponent. The mere practical exigencies of picture, statue, sonata, or poem, forbid an implicit obedience to those maxims logically deducible from such a radical proposition. Absolute realism would require that no alteration be made in the data of nature; that no right of selection, resolution, and recombination of parts be claimed by the artist; that filth of gutters and blues of heaven be equally interesting and delectable; that no extraneous attractions be imported into the object selected at random for copy; that the artist, without any impertinent notions of beauty and ugliness, transcribe unaltered, unshaded, unemphasized, what he sees, injecting into his work nothing of his own intellectual and moral self, no suggestion of a personal message to men, not the faintest impress of his presence and preference. In fact, absolute realism is a theory which demands of the artist that he be a machine, and his work a

transparent window through which a man may look upon the objective world that surrounds him. Indeed the artist would have to be a machine undisturbed by any natural conditions whatsoever, always and in all places equally able and willing to observe and reproduce. The photographic camera is far too human, to be the ideal practitioner. It has an unwarranted prejudice for light. Vague profundities of twilight awe and midnight horror—these the sensitive plate refuses to report. The eye can see more than the camera, but unfortunately behind the eye is lodged a living sensitive soul—a medium whose refracting power is never absolutely calculable. For after all, the eye most scientifically trained has its theory to prove, puts its construction upon things, sees only what attracts it, and has a history which determines its method of observation, and the nature of what attracts and fails to attract.

Indeed the very constitution of the eye is a mute reproof to realism. All things are seen according to the eye's structure and not primarily according to the structure of things. There is a horizon. Things appear to us grouped according to our own position. So it is with the soul. And every artist will have to reckon sooner or later—the sooner the better for himself and his work—with the soul in its totality. And, by the way, be it said here that the artist who consults the soul's demand for beauty, cannot afford to neglect its demand for goodness. All realism is an exaggerated attempt to satisfy the soul's demand for truth. Let us remember that man is a unit no matter how much we may dissect him in our text-books of psychology, theology, rhetoric, or anatomy. There is one soul with many faculties. If satisfied as to truth, but morally offended, the hurt will counteract the delight. Let the artist theorize as he will, he can never declare himself independent of the ultimate moral ideals, much less of contemporary feelings as to what is repulsive, foul, and villainous. Baudelaire in his terrific poem "*La Charogne*" is at bottom no realist. It is not in such illumination, with such ironic surroundings that, as a

rule, an abandoned carcass is seen. The most obstinate realist would find, that only those of his works which happened to give some favorable aspect of nature, some shocking or lovely combination, allowing of a definite, rational, or emotional construction, would attract and hold the attention of his public. The public always was and will be idealistic. It has enough to do with dust and squalor. It loves tinsel — anything that will rescue it from the weariness of the commonplace. Fidelity to crude fact is the last thing it appreciates. It may admire and praise the skill of the literal copyist, but it will soon turn away bored or angered from his work. In words you may assert that all things in nature are equally beautiful. When it comes to practice, it is soon found that all things will not equally endure artistic reproduction. But a theory that offers no infallible guidance to practice, that leaves so much to instinct, luck, or a common sense deliberately hostile to it, is of little real use. What then of realism?

It is not so much a theory, as a reactionist cry. It is a plea, as we said above, for truth. But as truth is not all that the soul wants, realism is quite impotent or rather inadequate to rule when the reins of government are put in its hands. Now what is idealism?

To give, in fancy, free scope to the powers of nature, to hasten the process of their evolution, to bring it, in idea, to its apparently rational conclusion, its craved completion and perfection; this, we should say, is to idealize. Idealistic art portrays that final state or some visibly advancing stage in the process of its attainment. Often, in nature we find isolated instances of realistically reproducible landscapes, faces, and color-groupings. These serve as educative hints. The artist understands that these isolated instances are what will bring a panic of joy to the hearts of men. A radiant sunset, a vast expanse of nacreous waters, a spread of marsh netted with reflected blue or gold, a plain of mingling fields and woods, a burst of icy peaks from among forested foothills, a ravine loud with the rapturous tumult of

torrents, the upheaval of cloud-continent threatening to bury our awe-struck world, a child in careless merriment, a woman, the perfection of all things seen! These and a thousand other isolated instances present themselves again and again in the history of mankind. A hunger is whetted beyond patient endurance. More! is the cry, more! and the philosopher tells us, as best he can, why it is we feel this hunger, and what it is in these things that appeases it. The artist catches glimpses with his soul's eye of "the light that never was on sea or land," made imaginable however by his experience of stars and moon and sun; and with symbols—visible forms, colors, musical tones, and words—he essays to impart his vision—symbols which, while they present not the things themselves but only a sense-suggestion of them, give us, who are at bottom most in love with things, a moment's delirious illusion of seeing, hearing, having, and handling *things*. To the extent implied in this requisite illusion must the artist be a realist. He must be plausible.

But the subject of our main inquiry is whether we can reasonably ascribe perpetuity to art, on the assumption of continuous and accelerated human development? We take for granted that there is truth, though not yet fully apprehended. Such an act of faith precedes all scientific research, and all philosophic speculation. We take for granted that centuries of equalizing culture will bring men more and more to the acceptance of one view of things, one philosophy, one truth. We assume that man will get more and more a mastery over the lower nature which fosters diversity of opinion for sheer diversity's sake. That harmony, not disharmony, kosmos, not chaos is the goal of present movement,—in other words, of progress.

Fully aware of the impossibility of prophesying truly without a sure grasp on some eternal principle and an absolute acquaintance with things as they now are, we claim no greater value for our prognostications than that which belongs to a well-meaning piece of fallible speculation. We

are sufficiently unbiased to acknowledge that we doubtless are equipped with unconscious biases enough to fit out with them a whole host of scientists and scholars in battle array, though alas! their science and scholarship are forever — so far as we are concerned — beyond the attainment even of our knights of day-dream adventure. If we take up in turn all the main thinkable hypotheses, in regard to the universe, and ascertain what relation to each one of these is borne by the problem of perpetuity for art, we shall have resolved, if our thinking has been correct, this vexatious problem into another, still more vexatious, namely, which of these philosophic attitudes will triumph? And here we propose to leave the matter, because, doubtless, we are not prepared to offer a solution to the second problem with which all our good-natured readers would agree. We shall in thus proceeding do no worse than the scientists of all time. Asked to solve a riddle, they propound another more difficult as a solution. And if the lively exercise of man's highest faculties in order to their greatest development be the purpose of human life, are we not glad that the Sphinx of earthly wisdom is a sophist and a deceiver? First of all let us assume the truth of positivism, that is to say, we are to take for granted that the proper attitude of the philosophic mind is that of hostility to philosophy, denying any ultimate human explanation, waiving all theory, and contenting itself with the mere accumulation of facts, data of experience. To be sure a classification for convenience will be made, and the notes of each class will be stated — but the classification must be always regarded as only for convenience, and the notes of each class as tentative expressions; further experience may require an entire reclassification, an entire re-statement of the so-called laws of nature. In plain words, we are to accept things as they present themselves to us. We are not to surmise the existence of harmonizing and explanatory facts which are not revealed as such. The law of cause and effect is stated as a law of phenomenal sequence. Observed facts are the *all* which it is licit to contemplate.

What becomes of art, if this be the true attitude of the intelligent? What is its office? To express these observed laws of nature, these abstract statements of her customary workings, allegorically for the sake of those who are yet unable to grasp them directly. Art takes the rank of a more or less unconscious expositor of science. This is the rank that M. Taine assigns to it in the first chapters of his *Philosophy of Art*. But on the hypothesis of ultimate universal education, this office will become useless. Art will have a sinecure. It will be more and more transparent, surrendering more and more its concrete methods. Finally art will be, as a teacher, altogether relegated to the nursery or kindergarten. To cultivated men its only sphere of enjoyable usefulness would be that of mimicry. But mimicry is permanently pleasurable only to those who possess, or believe that they can and will possess, the real things mimicked. What a torment was that of Tantalus! What a diabolical spirit would be that of a mimicking art for the poor and impotent, showing them what they might enjoy but must never have! Its sphere of possible beneficence is identical with the sphere of its uselessness and supersession by actual things. The rich can enjoy more or less the imitative suggestions of art, because they can at any moment replace them by the positive objects suggested. What is then presumably the dignity left to art? The mirror behind a splendid show-case, feebly duplicating what is before it, for an instant's frivolously amusing illusion as the passer-by looks in.

Remember that all idealizing in art is banned by positivism as sentimentality quite behind the times. Art can therefore reasonably furnish nothing but what already exists far more satisfactorily in sensible reality. Whenever she exploits the vaulting ambition of the heart, suggests the pursuit of rainbow-contacts, she is an immoral disturber of the normal contentment which the practical man cultivates above all else.

Let us summarize for positivism. The love of things "as

they are" makes art wicked for the poor, foolish and trifling for the rich. But what is wicked or foolish and trifling suffers extinction in due time. Only what is kindly, beneficent, wise, and useful will in the long run be sought and preserved by men.

As men develop more and more their capacity for thought, they take less and less of dominant pleasure in the play of the senses, and therefore in the presentation of truth through sensible combinations, which is *art*, according to positivism. Direct approach to truth is preferred to circuitous wanderings; immediate sight to the guess work of so-called intuition or faith. How easy it is to show from past and present experience what must always be the fate of art with those who prefer abstract statements about the workings of things, to the things themselves! What patronizing affability at the very best do not your scholars, scientists, philosophers, and theologians show to art and artists; what a half-cynical respect, put on for the sake of courtesy, do they not show for the fine phrensy and its methods of operation! The arid scholar, scientist, philosopher, and theologian, when in a particularly gentle humor, will grant, may be, to art a subordinate place among the forces working for the dissemination of knowledge and the acceleration of culture. Now and then a gracious Darwin will go so far as to deplore his own lost susceptibility to the charmers of men's half-witted infancy. Some will consider art very convenient as a mine of philological and archæological data, a sort of embalming salve for curious anthropological mummies. The theologian will admit that art is not necessarily pernicious, that under proper conditions "she" may become a "handmaid" to "Dame" Theology. He overlooks the fact that religion and art have always tended to corrupt each other by a misapprehension of each other's sphere. The artist, in his secret soul, of course reversed the proposition of the theologian. Dame Art found a convenient slave in theology — for theology furnished subjects and purchasers. But Dame Art stooped to conquer, knowing well the bitter temper of

her slave, and with gracious words she forced her to a full submission. The mutual attractions of art and religion have always served to disturb their individual equilibrium. Think of some hymns that we sing—the detestable heresies they snugly enshrine for the pious folk, safe from the heresy-hunters, because enshrined in equally detestable doggerel! Think of the secularization of the Church during the periods of art revival! Think of the mortification of art in times of spiritual fervor! To be sure it is not to an abstract love of truth only that we are indebted for those ghastly eyes, those shrewish cheek-bones, those saintly fingers and toes, those ribs and kneecaps—the whole skeleton grinning through transparent yellow parchment intended to pass for flesh and skin. To be sure these morbid horrors are 'due full as much to the spiritual teacher as to the scholar and theologian. Still, we feel that they were presented with the full approval of scholar and theologian. But enough of this. We are content if we have merely indicated the tendency in those given to the search of truth in abstract form to disparage, belittle, and degrade art. If all men should in the process of time come to a view such as theirs,—and of course a thoroughgoing, orthodox, scientific, scholarly, and theological millennium involves this holy hope—art will lie down to sleep in the tomb of her fathers—a tomb hewn out of the granite of their contempt, and sealed with a sneer for seal.

Let us now set before our minds very briefly the great hypotheses in respect to mind and matter that present themselves to all men except consistent positivists, who decide a priori that none of them can have any validity much less truth, or at least that they have a reasonable right to commit themselves to none.

1. We can hold that matter and spirit are two realities distinct in essence and nature; they however coöperate, though how and why is not clear. At this juncture there is ample opportunity for speculation. We call such a view *dualism*, and all philosophic systems that make it their point of departure, *dualistic*.

2. We can hold that matter and spirit are two phases or manners of appearing to man of one reality ; matter, being a generic name for all its self-presentations to the senses ; spirit, a generic name for all its self-presentations to the mind. Matter and spirit are thus supposed to be distinct only in our perception, but identical in reality. Upon this theory every particle of matter is at the same time a particle of spirit, in virtue of which fact it is enabled to show itself to our mind. Our body is an organized congeries of material particles, our soul the organized unity of their spiritual potencies. Every change in body is also a change in soul. This theory is called *monism*. It is the doctrine first taught by Spinoza, and ably championed to-day by many notable scientists in Europe and America.

3. We can hold that only one of the two — spirit and matter — is the reality. If we give our preference to matter, and call spirit a function or form of its activity, we profess to believe in the theory called *materialism*. It may be said that the majority of leading scientists in our day are *materialists*.

4. We can hold that only one of the two — spirit and matter — is reality and give our preference to spirit. We will call matter a manner of spirit's operation upon us — one mode of its self-manifestation. This theory has been held in modified forms by many of the most eminent philosophers of modern times, and is called *idealism*. To avoid confusion of terms in this paper we shall call it *spiritism*.

Let us begin with materialism, the third philosophic conjecture in the order we arbitrarily assigned to them. The materialist is not like the positivist necessarily hostile to idealistic art — in the sense which we gave to the word *idealizing*: — a giving, in fancy, free scope to the powers of nature, an imaginative hastening of the manifest evolutionary tendency in things. In so far as the materialist is opposed to idealism in art, he suffers from the same limitations as the consistent positivist. He makes art an instructor for primary grades — which science always supersedes

with the acquisition of adequate culture ; or he makes art a mere mimicker of things. At best the artist plays with certain phases of matter to suggest mental processes which are but functions of the matter of the brain, and which could always be better suggested by the solid things themselves which the artist uses as models. Robert Browning's simoniacal prelate is of this opinion :

We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have : he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,
But not so thoroughly, that, if fate allowed,
He would not have it also in my sense.

.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game.

—[*Bishop Blougram's Apology.*]

But realistic art, in the hands of the materialist, will doubtless never be truly *realistic*. He has a theory to prove. Without his will he obscures the data of nature that seem to go against it. He will limit himself to the reproduction of of flesh and that which suggests the uses and satisfaction of the flesh. Thus art runs great danger of becoming depraved, a secret, more or less respectable, generator of base passions. For only by suggesting the pleasures of sense has materialistic art a chance to please and therefore to succeed. And if the materialist gives himself over to idealizing, what a pandemonium will his gallery and his volume of poems become ; what a haunt of lascivious nudities and gluttonous excesses ! For after all, as an artist he has a losing cause. He has no source of nobler inspiration ; he must be aridly abstract, which is suicidal ; or he must make a shameless appeal to the lusts of the flesh.

Dualism and monism will permit of practically the same æsthetic theory, though the latter only is able to assign a definite dignity to art.

Dualism admits the coöperation of matter and spirit. It recognizes the superiority of their united to their single efforts, as all men recognize the superiority of two to one. The more harmonious the coöperation, the more truly are

they two, instead of one and a fraction. The sum of their effects is an algebraic sum. In so far as they conflict, they annul each other. The greatest actual result is obtained when all their effects are positive, mutually contributive.

Monism views matter and spirit as two attributes of one substance, whereby we know it to be real. The highest degree of reality for us belongs consequently to that which manifests itself through both, and thus the greatest efficacy and value for man belong to that which has both a material and a spiritual sphere of discernible action.

Dualism and monism, therefore, will alike demand of art a symbol or sensible body of expression, proportionate to its import, or sensitive soul of meaning. Both will demand an adjustment and balance between thought and technique. With this difference however, that the dualist will not explain their connection and coöperation. He will not be able to require of the artist a fair equalization of the material and spiritual elements of art. A lack in the one could, theoretically at least, be amply compensated for by a superabundance of the other. Why not? A quite satisfactory answer drawn from the premises of unadulterated dualism seems hardly possible. Whereas the monist can enforce the principle of equilibrium. According to him an expression of the real is defective when one-sided; the real is fully manifest to man only when spirit and matter unite in equal proportion to express it; and since priority belongs to neither, neither should be preferred. Both lose expressive power if either outbalances the other.

Supposing that either dualism or monism be verified by the racial evolution of man, what chance has art for perpetuity? The dualist will hardly, the monist certainly not, give his preference to abstract science. The very fact that it is abstracted from one real element in things makes it inferior to concrete art. According to monism at least, science is the mere forerunner and prophet. Art is its fulfilment. The world wants art not science. Science discovers the idea, art gives it a fuller reality, setting it in competition

with sensible things. We do not mean to deny that monism as well as dualism will allow of a realistic theory of art, which would be just as suicidal in this case as any other. But we would affirm that there is an inherent reason why the dualist and monist will be, as artist, a champion of idealism. Many ideas he finds embodied, many are bodiless. When will his works best compete with real things? When embodying ideas more satisfactorily embodied by them, or when furnishing palpable, visible, and audible forms to ideas that are nowhere, or at all events rarely, embodied by them? Will not the artist naturally lean towards idealism, towards the representation of rare and fortunate combinations, will he not abjure, even without any thought upon the subject, the realism which would make competition with things an impossibility for his work. Both dualist and materialist, recognizing the reality of spirit, make logical the embodiment of hitherto homeless ideas. A positivist is committed to realism, a materialist can idealize only by an exaggeration of what appears.

But it is still possible to ask the question why should the dualist and monist, resort to art? If, an idea is homeless in reality, or rare, is it not possible to give it a home, to reproduce it again in the realm of solid things? Now, plainly had man the ability to hasten the evolution of things as he pleased, there would not be the same temptation to create artistic works. But even if the power of adequate interference were not denied him, there would still be the awkward barrier of space. To be sure there are in the Alps, scenes nobler than painter or poet can represent, and in mid-ocean, on the desert, in forest and prairie, there are scenes equally noble. How shall they, however, be brought together for comparison, for quiet successive admiration, for repeated scrutiny? Man will always have to console himself with art, no matter what fantastic triumphs over space and time some future Bellamy may predict for him. We do not deny for a moment, however, that could men be freed from barriers of space and time altogether, could they hasten

growth, retard decay, interfere successfully at will with nature, art would cease to have any reason for its existence. Every sane man would prefer perfect things to imperfect copies of perfect things. But of course anything of this sort is not expected. As long as man is a denizen of earth, he will do in idea what he cannot do in fact, and he will eternalize and embody his idea. We cannot make men physically perfect? Well, we will set to work to carve us an Apollo, to image to ourselves what we conceive to be the destiny of human evolution on the plane of physical form. The processes of natural idealizing, or evolution, are too slow, so we bring them to their close, at least in some worthy work of the imagination. Now we may say that art has thus practical perpetuity. In heaven there may be no architects, sculptors, painters, poets, and musicians; on earth as long as men have power to think beyond what they see and hear and feel, they will glory in artists and delight in their works.

Nor can it be said that granting this practical perpetuity to art, it will be nevertheless one of ever decreasing importance. With every attainment, vision and aspiration increase proportionately. The more power man learns to wield over nature, the more powers will he discover yet to be subdued, the more fresh occasions will he find for these powers to exercise a beneficent interference with the course of things. The growth of science is but the herald of a correspondent growth of art. Every advance of science the discoverer, is a new opportunity for art the pioneer settler, and final inhabitant.

And suppose for a moment that no new subjects, no new realms to conquer be discovered by science. There is not only a real need for a unique incorporation of an idea, there must be series of manifold re-incarnations. *Omnis determinatio est negatio*. Say what you will, the soul is persuaded that so it is. In imagination man's protean self can adapt itself to many and various external expressions. Why should only one of two possible, mutually exclusive moods be made dominant? Why should the soul that is to-

day placid and to-morrow tumultuous have a neutral aspect, or one that fixes this rather than that of these equally real phases of its being? Why is there no audible minority report? Perhaps that minority constitutes the true "remnant." What soul does not realize that much of what is best is in the never to be suppressed yet evermore thwarted minority; unable thus to gain the ascendant and impress itself on the body?

Man believes the self to be many in aspect but perceives the body to be one — a composite photograph at the very best — and therefore a quite inadequate portraiture. So the Madonna idea is as wide and deep as mankind. Why should she — the beatified Virgin have dark hair and dark eyes only? Are there no fair-haired, blue-eyed mothers? Is only the dark-haired and dark-eyed to feel herself akin to the ideal of virgin womanhood? Indeed the heart of mankind would feel better satisfied could eyes and hair have all humanly possible hues at once, and since that may not be, the next best thing is a series of presentations or external conceptions of the one Madonna idea. The true artist-soul loves, values all — even the least gracious — all that are sincere attempts to give a real body to the idea. He will feel that only when all normal womanly types have been sanctified by due dedication to the Madonna idea in some masterpiece, has the spirit of art fulfilled its proper task. And all this will have a philosophic justification for the monist. The various presentations are various attempts to give reality to an idea — and its indeterminateness for humanity at large, demands this variety of embodiment. And what has been said of eyes and hair, and other externals, is true also of more inward possibilities of womanly variation. Wonder, humility, pride, amazement — what might not be the emotion with which the girl-mother views her divine child? The task of art is thus infinite. Only with an evolution working steadily toward tedious uniformity of type and unanimity of emotive response to circumstances, will art ever suffer a check to her triumphal procession.

Last of all theories let us consider idealism or, as we have agreed to call it throughout this paper, spiritism. What will be its effect upon æsthetics? Matter and all its phenomena are but modes of the spirit's activity, more or less supposititious media of its practical, willed self-exercise. They are felt to be unreal, or real only with a borrowed reality. The ideal of spiritism is pure thought, never invested with sensible symbol-forms, immediately communicated, potent in and of itself to create and alter currents of thought and feeling. To the spiritist, who is thoroughgoing, all art-expression is but a confession of our poverty, of our deplorable incapacity for direct intercourse. It is but a poor temporary substitute, an educative chrysalis, from which human soul-communication will have to free itself ere it can unfold the full glory of its possibilities.

Spiritism is not, however, restless in this realm of the apparent. In dealing with it, perfectly persuaded that spirit alone has prime reality, its votary knows that he is dealing with a mask, a show, a phantasm, at most a symbolic alphabet. The only purpose of the visible, audible, tangible expressions of art, is the conveyance of "meaning."

Here, as is so often the case, we find extremes of thought meeting in one practice. Positivism and materialism resemble spiritism in this dissatisfaction with art. Only the former regard it as capable of supersession by science—abstract statements about material phenomena—or by the phenomena themselves. While the latter, spiritism, would not know what to do with such abstract statements or such phantoms. It desires an immediate experience of the Reality underlying that matter of which the so-called laws, or formulated habitudes, constitute science.

Under the intellectual patronage of spiritism art becomes mystic or merely significant. Consequently it becomes very soon conventional because it attends so little to the models of nature, and desires the quickest and brightest flash of meaning with the least flame of sense, and there is always the danger that the symbol should be too startling if new,

too attractive and all-absorbing if beautiful, detracting therefore from the prominence of the thing symbolized.

That art cannot but die away when expressed in a hieroglyphic tongue gradually simplified, more and more rigid and sterile, is not only theoretically, but we think practically, demonstrable. Christianity, in so far as it necessitates a philosophy, is purely idealistic. To the masses it is conveniently dualistic. To all mystics, pietists, vigorous seekers after God, art loses rapidly in interest, and why this always will be so, is easy to understand.

As Browning puts it so well in his "Rabbi Ben Ezra," the true mystic does not consider that mere *work* or *efficacy* is the test of a man and his success.

It is indeed

"What the world's coarse thumb
And finger fail to plumb"

that he prizes most in himself. As artist, therefore, he would wish to express

"All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure
That weighed not as his *work*, yet swelled the *man's* amount."

And yet, as he shows, the artist is impotent to do this except by most pitiful suggestions, for these rarest realities are

"Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a *narrow* act,"

and not therefore dramatically presentable, no material for architect, sculptor, painter—

"Fancies that broke through language and escaped,"

ay, eluding the very poet! At last, only the musician will be patronized by the spiritist. But, as Cousin points out, it will be because music expresses nothing definitely, that it will for a time pass for an adequate expression of all. Soon, however, the imperious teacher of high things will see that he has been deluded; that *indefiniteness* is not *infinity* — is indeed dangerous, as it will express the exalted and the sensual with equal impartiality, for ascetic and worldly res-

pectively, being rather of the nature of a stimulant, like hashish, giving each man his paradise in total accord with the man's soul.

Now we do not deny that the spiritist takes interest in art, only we desire to point out that this will be due not to his spiritism, but rather to that section of his nature yet unsubdued by his theory, or to his desire to use art as a common ground with the unconverted masses. All mankind having once become absolute spiritists in practice as well as in theory, there would be a wholesale translation of mankind, so to speak, in chariots of fire, drawn by steeds of fire, through the obscuring clouds of form to the serene depth of spotless blue, of immediate absorption in the supreme Reality. The body is a barrier, all forms of art would be barriers to ideas. May be, like window-panes of horn, they are more transparent than walls of wood or stone. No panes, however, would be better still.

It is the inherent spiritism of Christianity that produced all the deformed mediæval art, the whitewashed walls of puritan meeting houses, the exile of ornament and music from the sanctuary, the anti-sacramentalism of the Friends.

We grant, that the sacramental system itself, the allegoric method of instruction with which the New Testament familiarizes us, seem to give their sanction to art — a charter of practical perpetuity. But we must remember that there is no balance between sign and thing signified; between idea and sensible form. Like a perfume that cannot be imprisoned in the open rose, but will disembody itself and float on the summer air, so the infinite meaning forsakes its finite suggestion. The mind fastens on the idea, and forgets the form, and with this forgetting comes neglect, and with the neglect of form, the decay of art. No one will argue, we believe, that the spiritism of Christianity ever gave a healthy encouragement to art. Spiritism is of necessity superarrogant when confronted with the translation of spirit in material language. Art, so to say, takes a little of heaven and brings it illusively down to earth. Religion strives to seize upon

earth and bodily transport it into heaven. How can religion of the spiritual kind, whose problem is the apotheosis of man, agree upon fair terms of agreement with the arts whose main effort it is to terrestrialize heaven, making even the Ancient of Days appear as infinitely "magnified man," in statue, painting, and poem ?

To summarize in conclusion the results of our discussion. Art will thrive, hold a position of perpetual dignity only with monism regnant.

It must suffer more or less from the predominance of either materialism or spiritism.

Under the absolutely consistent rule of positivism art must perish.

With dualism supreme, art would run great risk of losing a fair balance, because the dualist is so sure to emphasize one or the other of his uncombinable hostile twain.

We venture to suggest that the undisputed acceptance of monism itself might tend to injure the artist, making his work too conscious a practice of a precise and rigid æsthetic. Who knows but that the predominance of no theory in particular — intellectual anarchy — the mutual checkmating of various theories — leaving the artist heart-whole and fancy-free to follow his creative instincts — constitutes the most favorable condition for a robust and delight-giving art ? In that case, what of the perpetuity of art, on the hypothesis of a steady growth of civilization and intellectual order ?

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